Independence Texas 16th Feb. 1842

Society of Inquiry of
Princeton Theo. Semy.

Dear Brethren

At the meeting of Synod at Austin this last fall it was made my duty by that body to address you by letter upon the subject of "Texas a Missionary field." To write to you under these circumstances, would be a pleasure; but to represent the Synod is a responsibility ~~of a Responsibility~~ which I would prefer to have been lodged elsewhere. But though I now write in compliance with its recorded vote, still I am left entirely my own discretion as to matter & manner & I am often all but ~~at~~ preparing my individual opinions. It is always a difficult & often a delicate matter for a minister in such a field as this to tell the "truth, the whole truth & nothing but the truth." Too often the Missionary, when representing his own field abroad first turns the large end of a Telescope towards it & then gives a representation magnified beyond all bounds, at least in view of those who only use the natural organs of vision. All are liable to fall into this error, & probably some of us have frequently done so. One of my most prudent correspondents, long a devoted minister in this state but now in another says. "I am dissatisfied with the religious letters from Texas. Too highly colored. It ought to be represented as a Missionary field, as much so as California or Oregon." I wish to reverse the telescope & present perhaps another picture. I mean mainly to point out the difficulties of the country & such only as I presume are peculiar to it. And

First, this is a very newly settled country or rather it is an unsettled State as yet. Look at it a right. Say 200,000 inhabitants scattered over more than 320,000 square miles! And these till recently ~~were~~ & unsettledly all over the land. Many seem to know nothing about this & therefore make no allowance for these things, but are vexed & disheartened when

they came hither & have no patience. "Rome was not built in a day." Pennsylvania & New Jersey were once as Texas is now. The Lenapes & the Iroquises & Senecas were then had to suffer privations which are to be borne here. This view is suggestive I presume but. 2. The people generally are migratory. They have moved so much before they got here that they are habituated to it. They are too much like the miners in California always ready to move to new diggins. You may buy out anybody at a discount of cost price on his improvements & the temptation is still onward. Go to this man and question him & he will soon tell you he is only staying where he is & feels little interest in permanent fixtures. Ask him for a subscription for a church & he will tell you "my best lands are among the Indians whither I go as soon as it can be safely done." Gather him or his family into the church today & soon he is away on the frontier where no Sabbath or Sanctuary is, being too little attached to Zion to prize her above all Else. This is a difficulty. At Houston where I ministered over 6 years about 160 were enrolled into the church & I left up there half that number there. To meet this difficulty Presbyterians generally, & those here particularly ought to learn a lesson from Romanism. Some of her devotees even now, go afar from one Sanctuary to another. Not long since quite a colony of members of the same church came & settled here & then sent back to their Synod for a minister & when some months after a missionary was sent to them but two families remained & it would have required a Comanche Indian six months to ride down the rest.

(3) Generally our people are not religiously trained. A large proportion of our immigration is from the Southwestern States where Presbyterians are scarce. Hence it is not easy to build up Presbyterian Churches among such people.

Slowly, patiently, perseveringly you must labor & your membership comes more from the young than the old. Here in this respect you will find a different state of things from what happily exists in the more northern new States. There are few transplanted, indoctrinated & trained Presbyterians among us. Such generally value too highly their religious privileges in older neighborhoods to expose themselves & families in such new ones as ours. Here the blessed Bible & catechism must be taught before you can successfully explain or defend either. Among such a people doctrinal preaching is at a discount & tremendous appeals to the feelings at a premium.

(4) The people are far from being accustomed to give continuously for supporting the preached gospel. There is too much impulse & too little principle about the matter.

(5) They are much split up into sects. Every town & neighborhood is thus divided & subdivided & each strongly attached to its own party & often jealous of the rest.

(6) The settlements are widely scattered. But few points in the State will justify pastoral settlements. Something of an itinerant system is the only means of covering the whole field.

(7) Infidelity & superficiality are common. Here you will meet the followers of Alexander Campbell with all their gloss es of Scripture, all wider than "seven men" & all zealous for their intellectual faith & for going down under the water that you may go up to Heaven.

Such are some of the difficulties of the field. I think it right that I should honestly point them out. If they af-

you & cannot help it. I would rather hurt one of you should come appriged of the difficulties, with courage & faith to meet them than that ten of you should come & be disheartened & dispatisfied at not finding Churches organized & regular calls made out to you & all things made ready to your hands, & perhaps run away before they have seen any thing remarkable & blame us because we have not turned the world upside down for them.

Our country is large, is rapidly filling up, occupies a most important position & still needs more Presbyterian ministers. But they must be men of acceptable gifts who can preach by firelight or moonlight or no light & they must be imbued with the Spirit of Christ. Streams must be crossed without bridges, long journies made by compass, the saddle must become easy by habit, & the ear become used to the howl of the wolf on the lonely prairie & you must become accustomed to adventures of sleeping on the earth in the wild waste that they lose their novelty. All this & more must be borne by some before this desert will blossom.

We at present seriously need at least three Evangelists to travel & preach over the State. It is not a very pleasant mission nor is every one prepared for it, but to a man of the right kind no field could be more inviting.

The two Methodist, Sommerville & Fairbairn are pleasantly located, the former at Galveston, the latter at Houston. A man who would be acceptable would find an opening also at Matagorda. In Eastern Texas there are several openings. But it must be remembered that the country is almost entirely a missionary field & the ministry must be supported mainly from abroad. In Christ yours. J. M. Miller